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PREDICTION OF GERMAN MILITARY OFFENSIVES FROM SPEECHES OF LEADERS

Divisional Report No. 38

R&A 297

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R+A-297

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June 12, 1942

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PREDICTION OF GERMAN MILITARY OFFENSIVES FROM SPEECHES OF LEADERS

SUMMARY

An analysis is made of the speeches of Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, and Ribbentrop to discover whether there is any pattern of propaganda themes which may be a consistent indicator of coming military offensives. Though no such pattern appears, the discovery is made that preceding four major offensives the volume of speech-making characteristically declines just before each offensive.

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To answer a query as to whether there are unique features in German propaganda just prior to German military offensives, the following simple analysis was made:

The speeches of Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, and Ribbentrop delivered just prior to major offensives were studied and the amount of time devoted to certain themes (e.g., desire for peace) which might be thought to be indicative of a coming military campaign was determined. These leaders were chosen because they are directly or indirectly involved in offensive operations, and they are, at the same time, the major policy-makers and propaganda mouthpieces of the German State. The object of the analysis was to discover whether in the months immediately preceding an offensive there occurred a rapid increase in speaking time devoted to any particular theme. If such a rise should consistently recur, then such a theme would be a "predictor" of an offensive.

Themes as predictors. There are no themes that are consistently pushed prior to offensives. Table I shows some of the facts. The first entry in the table after

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January (1940) is 44, which means that of the ~~624 lines~~ (last column) of the quoted speeches of Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, and Ribbentrop, 44 per cent were devoted to justifying Germany's war effort.[1] Note that in reading down the table, the per cents read 44, 29, 13 as the months approach the invasion of Norway on April 9, 1940. It appears as if the speakers are progressively laying-off the justification theme. Before the Battle of Britain, however, time devoted to this theme increases slightly. Thus, through the table, no consistent pattern appears.

Besides the themes shown at the heads of the column, the following also were studied: Threats to the Next Victim, Threats to Other Than Next Victim (the diversion strategy), Self-Criticism, Warning the Home Front. No pre-offensive pattern appears among these. It seems obvious, therefore, that the themes chosen for emphasis before military offensives are chosen to fit the particular situation rather than as part of a consistent pre-offensive strategy.

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[1] The complete speeches were not availabe, so it was necessary to take the verbatim quotations of the speeches presented in the complete files of the New York Times, the London Times and the Bulletin of International News (Royal Institute of International Affairs). Each line was a unit of seven words.

The speeches were in certain instances not printed in full in these sources, but it should be noted that editorial selection would not account for consistent trends unless the editors knew beforehand the date of the opening of an offensive.

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TABLE I. SPACE DEVOTED TO CERTAIN THEMES IN THE SPEECHES OF GERMAN LEADERS PRIOR TO MILITARY OFFENSIVES

	Justify War	Desire Peace	Victory Certain	Jews Attacked	Total Lines
	%	%	%	%	
1940					
January	44	4	48	0	824
February	29	0	62	0	536
March-April 9	13	11	91	0	157
(Norway Invaded)					
July	20	11	66	2	2208
Aug.-Sept. 15	25	23	52	0	110
(Battle of Britain)					
1941					
January	36	3	49	0	914
February	13	4	67	17	577
March-April 6	34	0	52	0	139
(Balkan Campaign)					
May	49	34	31	12	1068
June 1-22	0	0	*	0	6
(Russia Invaded)					

* Only 6 lines for the whole period, and these were in this category.

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Volume of speech-making. But a rather startling fact did appear from this analysis. The sheer volume of speech-making consistently and rapidly declined before the invasion of Norway, the Battle of Britain, the Balkan campaign, and the invasion of Russia. These facts are clearly revealed in Figure 1. The bar diagrams at the extreme left reveal the situation just before the invasion of Norway. The first bar, for January 1940, means that Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and Ribbentrop delivered a total of 824 lines of text;[2] in February they delivered 573 lines; and from March 1 to April 9, 157 lines. The same trend occurs for the three later offensives, as the figure shows.

The situation of this spring (1942) is a little ambiguous. There was considerable speech-making in January, and then a lull in February and March. April brought a plethora of words (2000 lines)[3] May (1,027 lines), and from May 29 to June 8 no speeches have been reported; this suggests that the contemplated all-out offensive, barring changes of plans, is due.

One interpretation of these findings is that a month or so prior to an offensive the leaders engage in considerable

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[2] The value shown at the top of each bar is "adjusted" so as to read as a monthly rate for a period of 31 days.

[3] FCC reports are now used, since they are more complete than the previous sources.

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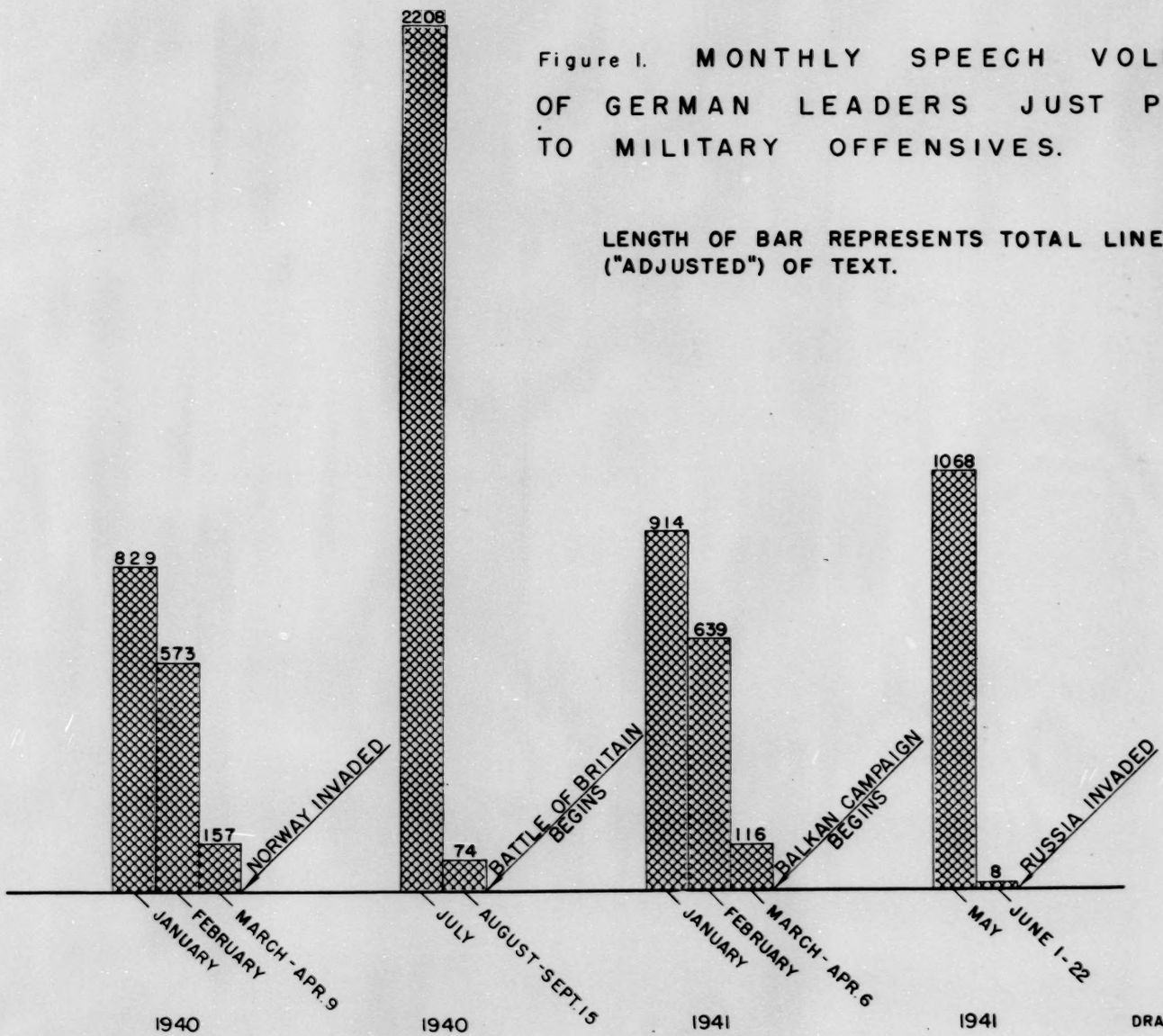
verbal groundwork for home and foreign consumption, in which the themes emphasized may vary with the circumstances. As, however, the dead-line for the offensive approaches, these men, especially Hitler, Goering and Ribbentrop, who besides being propagandists have administrative duties directly related to the all-important military offensive, have not the time for carefully worked out verbal offensive.

Figure I. MONTHLY SPEECH VOLUME OF GERMAN LEADERS JUST PRIOR TO MILITARY OFFENSIVES.

LENGTH OF BAR REPRESENTS TOTAL LINES ("ADJUSTED") OF TEXT.



NUMBER 621
JUNE 16, 1942

CONFIDENTIAL
DRAWN IN GEOG. DIV., O.S.S.